

C O P Y

"VIEWPOINT" by Robert Moore - 15.7.63.

Good evening -

Everybody who comes to Guiana, at this time, shakes his head and warns us that racialism will destroy us. Mr. Sandys is our most recent prophet but there has been and I suggest there will be many others. Their advice is always *moral* and their suggestions always laudable. The only trouble is that we already know their advice and we can anticipate their little *sermonettes*. Our trouble is, as a good preacher knows, that we know what is good, but we don't have the will to do it.

As you have been hearing recently there are a number of *historical* *forces* that have helped to keep Indian and Negro in separate compartments. Ironically, one of these factors has certainly been religion. Negroes are, and have been, by and large Christian, by *conviction* perhaps more than by conviction. The Indian has, with a number of notable Christian exceptions, have been a member of two quiet religions - Hinduism and Islam. But you can easily see what has happened. The Colonial Govt. being English was largely Christian in ethos - at least it showed a definite partiality to Christian denominations. The Indian by being a non-Christian felt that he was left out of the structure of things. Some Indians found that it was necessary to become Christians to get a break in life and many naturally *balked* at this idea. Many Indians felt a sense of resentment at their religion's exclusion from official recognition and they developed a hostility to Christianity - a hostility which helped to keep them separate in many important aspects from the Christian orientated members of the community.

Now at last the religions are being given equal status in the community. Or, put it another way, the state has been increasingly impartial to them all - as in fact a state ought to be. In fact Hindus, Muslims and Christians can now freely engage on programmes for increasing their impact on Guianese society. Here is where Islam can play its part. Now here, I think is a religion which can tremendously help in improving *true* racial relations in this country. It is ~~xxx~~ that in B.G. Islam has been and still largely an Indian religion. But this picture of Islam as being predominantly East Indian does not correspond with the reality of Islam in the outside world. In fact if you go to West Africa you will find millions of African Muslims. And some of them are very

distinguished too. Some of Islam's finest thinkers are West Africans. It seems to me not at all absurd to suggest that this religion can to

the tensions between the two races. If the leaders of the Muslim community - or the World Muslim Organisation could send to B.G. both West African Muslims as well as Pakastani's; if these West African Muslims could remain for some time to work in Muslim programmes here, the Islamic religion could well become another bridge between the two

racess. If even the African does not from the religion in large numbers, he can still be inspired with a certain respect for a religion which his brothers across the seas. And this respect could lead to a less hostile attitude to members of the Indian community who belong to it. A historical circumstance has tended to make Islam an enclave of East Indians. This circumstance can now be removed by visible evidence of Islam's supra racial character. One does not have to believe in the teachings of the religion to see that it can contribute to the health of our society. I think that it was Toymbee who said that a non-believer can be grateful to a religion which brings harmony. And among the many efforts which will have to be made to bring the race together, Islam's could be useful, even powerful.
